CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1658
9 January 2002

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

LETTER DATED 18 DECEMBER 2001 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, MR. VLADIMIR PUTIN, ON 13 DECEMBER 2001 IN CONNECTION WITH THE DECISION OF THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION TO WITHDRAW FROM THE ABM TREATY OF 1972*

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement made by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, on 13 December 2001 in connection with the decision by the Administration of the United States of America to withdraw from the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty).

I should be grateful if the statement could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all member States of the Conference and non-member States participating in its work.

(Signed) Leonid A. SKOTNIKOV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Russian Federation to the
Conference on Disarmament

* Reproduced from previously issued document A/56/707 of 14 December 2001 as attached.

Annex

Statement by Russian Federation President V.V. Putin, of 13 December 2001

The Administration of the United States of America declared today that it would withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in six months.

The Treaty indeed grants each of the parties the right to withdraw from it if there are exceptional circumstances. The United States leaders have repeatedly spoken about this, and such a step was not unexpected on our part. Nevertheless, we consider that this decision is mistaken.

As is well known, the Russian Federation, like the United States of America, as distinct from the other nuclear Powers, has for a long time possessed an effective system for overcoming anti-missile defence. Therefore, I can state with complete confidence that the decision taken by the United States President does not create a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.

At the same time, our country did not accept joint withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which the United States persistently proposed, and did everything that it could in order to maintain the Treaty. Today, I continue to believe that such a position is correct and well-founded. In this regard, the Russian Federation was guided first and foremost by a concern to maintain and strengthen the international legal basis in the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is indeed one of the pillars of the legal system in this field. This system was created through joint efforts over the course of recent decades.

In our view, the development of the situation in the contemporary world urgently dictates a certain logic of action.

Today, when the world is being confronted with new threats, a legal vacuum in the field of strategic stability must not be permitted, and the non-proliferation regimes for weapons of mass destruction must not be undermined.

I consider that the current level of the bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and the United States of America must not only be maintained, but must also be used for the speedy development of a new framework for strategic relations.

Together with the problem of anti-missile defence, the laying down in legal terms of the agreements reached on further radical, irreversible and verifiable reductions of strategic offensive weapons, in our opinion, down to the level of 1,500 to 2,200 nuclear warheads for each party is becoming particularly important under these circumstances.

In conclusion, I should like to point out the Russian Federation will continue to firmly adhere in world affairs to its principled policy aimed at strengthening strategic stability and international security.